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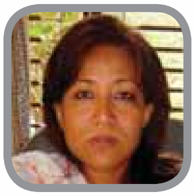

Sapana Pradhan Malla

Sapana Pradhan Malla, two other activists, to share 2008 Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize

Nepali attorney and organization have helped overcome cultural obstacles to achieve legal reforms extending gender equality

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July 8, 2008, New York, NY – The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation (PPGF) today announced that **Sapana Pradhan Malla** of Nepal will share its 2008 Women's Rights Prize with two other women's rights activists – **Yanar Mohammed** of Iraq and **Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian** of Israel – in a ceremony to be held this fall. The three will share the $500,000 prize.

Sapana Pradhan Malla has published extensively on the legal status of women in Nepal. As a practicing lawyer before the Supreme Court of Nepal, she has been an advocate for the rights of Nepali women in several landmark cases. Pradhan Malla has helped achieve legal reform through a process that begins with research – that is, determine how women are being affected by laws and then take that evidence into court. In spite of her success, she believes there is a significant problem in getting women to assert their new rights. For example, despite the criminalization of marital rape, she believes that no woman would actually use the protection now afforded under law. She stresses that Nepal, even as a secular country, is still held back by a caste system.

Sapana Pradhan Malla earned a Bachelor of Law degree from Tribhuvan University and a Masters of Law degree from Delhi University. A practicing lawyer before the Supreme Court of Nepal, Sapana Pradhan Malla has been involved in almost all leading public litigation in that country, including cases involving legalization of abortion, criminalization of marital rape, and equality in marriage and family law. Due in large part to her efforts, more than 64 discriminatory laws of Nepal have been struck down. The Human Trafficking Act that she helped draft has become a legal model for the region. Pradhan Malla was instrumental in securing the most recent legal reforms protecting the fundamental reproductive and property rights of women in Nepal. She has published extensively on the legal status of women in Nepal and has brought several landmark cases to Nepal's Supreme Court. A member of Nepal's Constituent Assembly, she is a strong advocate of women's participation in the political process and, as a result of her efforts and influence, women now make up one-third of the Assembly. She is dedicated to ensuring a comprehensive women's rights agenda within the constitutional framework. Pradhan Malla is president of the Forum for Women, Law & Development and vice president of the Legal Aid Consultancy Center, and serves as National Coordinator for the South Asian Women's Law Association.

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize is presented to an individual or group that has made significant contributions, often at great personal or professional risk, to furthering the rights of women and girls in any area and to advancing public awareness of the need for gender equality to achieve a just world.

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In addition to the cash award, Ms. Mohammed, Ms. Pradhan Malla, and Dr. Shalhoub-Kevorkian will each receive a gold medal.

The official citation reads:

The 2008 Gruber Women's Rights Prize is proudly presented to: Yanar Mohammed, Sapana Pradhan Malla, and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, three activists devoted to enhancing women's rights and empowering women under the most difficult conditions of armed conflict and war.

Yanar Mohammed, co-founder of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), for fighting tirelessly to stop the eradication of women's rights in Iraq. OWFI is a women's organization that has continued to speak out openly for women's rights against all odds.

Sapana Pradhan Malla, a member of Nepal's Constituent Assembly, for fighting to include women's human rights in the constitution and, as a member of the Forum for Women, Law & Development (FWLD), for leading the successful effort to decriminalize abortion and to criminalize marital rape.

Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a Palestinian feminist activist and researcher, for concentrating on sexual abuse and femicide, a term she coined for the abuse that puts women in a state of living death during times of war.

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